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"WHAT'S IN A NAME?"

AN examination of the illustrations in this number will give a fair idea of the eclecticism which is now prevailing in furnishing and decorating. This eclecticism may fairly be charged to the popular idea prevailing in this country, that "every man is a law unto himself," inciting each maker, as well as each buyer, to have a "style" of his own.

It is a curious fact, however, that the buyer not only demands a "style" thoroughly satisfactory to his own views, but he also wants a name for it, and as the comprehensive term "antique" is becoming more and more distasteful to the ordinary buyer, he now desires something bearing "Old English," or "Moresque," or "Grecian," or some other distinctive title. Under such circumstances, the customary refuge of the ordinary salesman is the "Renaissance," probably one of the words now in common use which is least understood and most ignorantly used. Our Editorial Sanctum (?) was a few days since visited by the traveling salesman of one of our representative furniture factories, who, in the course of an exposition on what the Renaissance was and was not, declared that there was "only one kind of Renaissance, and my folks (his employers) are making it"—he hadn't the most remote idea of the signification of the term, and became quite indignant when told that our illustrations of Spanish Renaissance were correctly named, and were historical, and drawn from the actual experiences of our artist, but when we further ventured to assert that there was also a French Renaissance and a German Renaissance, he assured us, with that overwhelming air of superiority peculiar to some commercial tourists, advertising and subscription canvassers, lightning rod dealers, etc., that it was useless to discuss the matter further. This man was a passably well informed gentleman, and represented very fairly the average amount of knowledge in this subject of "styles" and their names.

This prevailing ignorance about what does or does not belong to any certain epoch or style of decoration, a knowledge of which cannot be acquired without an educational course, is easily accounted for by the very recent and very rapid growth of interest in the matter. Sufficient time has not yet elapsed to enable the people to understand the difference between one style of design and another, and as yet they have merely caught an idea, and a very confused one too, of the various names. The confusion in regard to the proper naming of the various styles, may be also, in part, charged to the late "revival" of the "Queen Anne" and the "Eastlake" designs, under the meretricious teachings of a few art cranks. The distinctive naming of these two fashions, and the common talk about them for awhile, led many people into the habit of naming their furnishings as they would a piece of dress goods, and when those generally stiff and ungainly creations were superseded by the profuseness of ornamentation now prevalent, the desire for a name survived, and still demands to be satisfied.

It is the height of folly, however, to attempt to correctly name the colorings and ornamentation

now in common use. We saw, a few days since, the title of "Early English Renaissance" applied to a piece of furniture, the principal decoration of which were groupings of sunflowers, a couple of conventionalized lions, and some other features, none of which belonged to the period of decoration which was probably meant by the title; the anachronism of the use of the sunflower in the period of "Early English" was in itself a perfect absurdity. Under the circumstances, it seems that sensible people might well drop the idea of demanding a name for their furnishings, for it is assuredly a fact that, unless the matter is thoroughly understood by both seller and buyer, as it is not now by the majority, there will be a mistake made by either or both parties, and somebody that does know will have good cause to wonder why people will wrongly name a thing which would be quite as useful, and quite as enjoyable, with any other name, or with no name at all; an uncharitable person might say that the mis-naming was, after all, a mere whim of pretentious and ignorant pride.

OUR COLORED PLATE, in accordance with notices given, is omitted this month, and in its place we present four full pages in addition to our regular monthly number. Designers in furniture, mural decoration, wall-paper, etc., as well as wood carvers and amateurs, will undoubtedly find many suggestions in pages 145, 147, 149 and 153.

The "studies" used for the fruit, page 153, and heads, pages 145 and 147, are French works, the designs on page 149 are taken from various German and English works, including *Decoration* and *The Plumber and Decorator*. The publication of the colored plates will be resumed by the production of a series of designs, two on each plate, representing the colors and motifs or styles of ornamentation used by ancient nations, applied by our artist to modern uses. These plates are entirely original in composition and construction, and will serve as lesson-pictures for the instruction of our readers as to the meaning of Egyptian, Assyrian, Persian, Moresque, Greek, Roman, Pompeian, Neo-Greek, Renaissance, Gothic, Celtic and all other prominent ancient styles. In the prevailing fashion of applying some ancient name to all kinds of decoration and ornament, a scholarly exposition of what actually constitutes these much-quoted styles cannot fail to be of value.

THE mutual dependence of America and Europe was recently and pleasantly commented upon by the London *Times*, and while it did not mention art and artistic work as among the blessings from the United States, it gave unstinted praise to the more substantial and essential products of dress materials and live stock. With a consciousness of the compliment, we may fairly ask some recognition of our artistic manufactures also. Without any spread-eagleism, much credit may be claimed for the cabinet-ware exported to European markets. One large furniture firm in this city is fitting up, at this very time, several private residences in England, and we know of one instance where their work has been sent even to Paris. Certainly our furniture and interior decorations are well received in the English stores and in other foreign parts. Our London article in this issue refers to the report made by a member of the British Association of Architects upon the richness in suggestions of American architectural work, and calling attention to this field as a desirable one for study, and there is good reason to believe that our furniture architecture will soon be recognized in the same manner.